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HONG KONG (AP)--A HONG KONG NEWSPAPER REPORTED MONDAY THAT TWO AMERICANS HELD PRISONER BY COMMUNIST CHINA FOR 19 YEARS WOULD BE FREED LATER IN THE DAY.

THEY WERE NAMED AS JOHN THOMAS DOWNEY, 41, AND RICHARD FECTEAU, 43, WHOSE PLANE WAS SHOT DOWN IN 1952 ON A FLIGHT FROM KOREA TO JAPAN DURING THE KOREAN WAR. THEY WERE LISTED AS CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. ARMY.

DOWNEY IS FROM NEW BRITAIN, CONN.; FECTEAU IS FROM LYNN, MASS. A SPOKESMAN FOR THE U.S. CONSULATE-GENERAL HERE SAID: "WE HAVE NO COMMENT TO MAKE. ANY COMMENT WILL COME FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN WASHINGTON.

HE ALSO REFUSED COMMENT WHEN ASKED WHERE THE TWO MEN WOULD GO FROM HERE IF THEY DID CROSS INTO HONG KONG.

THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT SAID IT HAD NO INFORMATION THAT THE TWO MEN WOULD BE RELEASED, BUT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE SUGGESTED THERE WOULD BE NO INDICATION BEFORE THE MEN ACTUALLY CROSSED THE BORDER INTO HONG KONG.

THE NEWSPAPER--THE STAR--REPORTED THAT THE RELEASE WOULD TAKE PLACE ABOUT MIDDAY MONDAY BUT GAVE NO SOURCE FOR ITS INFORMATION.

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